

eliminate the American Bar Association's essential role in reviewing and providing advice on the qualifications of potential judges before those nominations are sent to the Senate for confirmation.

For the past 53 years the American Bar Association has played a critical role in the judicial nominations process by evaluating potential candidates, first for the Senate in 1948, and then in 1952 for President Dwight D. Eisenhower and his eight successors, Democrat and Republican. The ABA's 15-member Standing Committee on Federal Judiciary has examined the candidates' experience and legal writings and then confidentially interviewed judges and lawyers who have worked with the candidates in order to assess their professional reputation.

President Eisenhower's motivation for seeking the ABA's recommendations is precisely the reason I am disturbed by the Bush Administration's move to skewer the ABA's role in screening new judges: President Eisenhower sought to insulate the judicial nomination process from political pressures by inviting the American Bar Association to give him ratings of candidates' professional qualifications. Over the years the ABA's assessments of judicial nominees have been invaluable, and I for one do not support the Bush Administration's retreat from injecting more, not less, information about the competency, temperament, and integrity of the potential judges into the nominations process.

Until this year, the bar association has been given advance word from the administration on potential judges. The ABA's special team of lawyers has been able to analyze the candidates' career, assess their professional reputation, and rate the prospective nominees as qualified, well qualified, or not qualified. This process is totally confidential and enables the colleagues of nominees to answer the questions fairly and honestly.

The White House's decision not to release the names of potential judges to the ABA before they are announced to the public is a tragedy. The nomination process will be severely impaired by President Bush's decision. With this move, the President has lost the opportunity to learn as much as possible about nominees early on in the nominations process.

What I fear most and what I believe will happen is that public confidence in the judicial nominations process will fade. And I'd point out, that confidence in the judicial system and in the objectivity of the court is imperative in the wake of the 5-4 Supreme Court ruling that determined the outcome of the last Presidential election. I would expect President Bush to work diligently to disabuse the country of the notion that the law is a subset of politics, not serve to reinforce that impression.

It is my belief that President Bush's decision signals a retreat from impartiality in the judicial nomination process. No longer will the President be troubled with the objective recommendations of the ABA, but will be free to nominate whichever candidates pass political muster. The ABA vetting process is important to reassure the public that selecting judges for the federal bench is not just the work of a small inner-circle of politicians and advisors who are looking for a person of a certain political persuasion.

The White House legal team has already interviewed nearly 60 lawyers for new judgeships and has done so without consulting the ABA. Most of the interviews undertaken so far have been for the 29 vacancies on the courts of appeal, which as you know Mr. President, is the level just below the Supreme Court. I don't want to return to the days before the ABA was brought into the process to make it more fair and objective, but I fear that's exactly where we have ended up.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business Friday, March 23, 2001, the Federal debt stood at \$5,734,215,116,583.82, Five trillion, seven hundred thirty-four billion, two hundred fifteen million, one hundred sixteen thousand, five hundred eighty-three dollars and eighty-two cents.

One year ago, March 23, 2000, the Federal debt stood at \$5,729,459,000,000, Five trillion, seven hundred twenty-nine billion, four hundred fifty-nine million.

Twenty-five years ago, March 23, 1976, the Federal debt stood at \$599,190,000,000, Five hundred ninety-nine billion, one hundred ninety million, which reflects a debt increase of more than \$5 trillion, \$5,134,549,116,583.82, Five trillion, one hundred thirty-four billion, five hundred forty-nine million, one hundred sixteen thousand, five hundred eighty-three dollars and eighty-two cents, during the past 25 years.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

ED HILL, J.J. BARRY AND JERRY O'CONNOR

• Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I congratulate Ed Hill, the new president of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, IBEW, on his election, and thank the outgoing president, J.J. "Jack" Barry, for his years of dedicated service to IBEW.

When I think about all the hard work and long hours presidents Hill and Barry have put in over the years, I am reminded of a story that one of my heroes, the great Hubert H. Humphrey liked to tell.

It was Humphrey's 65th birthday, and he was celebrating with his grand-

children. One of the grandkids looked up and said, "Grandpa, how long have you been a Democrat?"

Humphrey thought about that for a moment, and replied, "Well, I've been a Democrat for 70 years."

His grandson said, "Grandpa, how could you have been a Democrat for 70 years when you're only 65 years old?"

"Easy," Humphrey answered, "I've put in a lot of overtime."

Well, these men have put in a lot of overtime on behalf of the IBEW and on behalf of all Americans.

You know, I like to tell people, you go to any town in America, rural or urban, big or small, and you'll see the IBEW's work on display. Whether it's lighting our homes, or heating our schools, or bringing the Internet to our libraries, it's clear that the IBEW's work is critical to our families and our economy.

I welcome the new leadership and express my gratitude to the outgoing leadership.

Ed Hill hails from Beaver County, PA, and he has a long history with the IBEW. Ed joined IBEW Local 712 in his hometown back in 1956 and worked his way up to business manager in 1970. He became part of the IBEW staff in 1982, and, by 1994, he was a Vice President in charge of operations in Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey and Delaware.

In 1997, Ed became the IBEW's second highest-ranking officer, and he worked hard to bring the latest technology to IBEW's operations. He also spent long hours building the membership of IBEW-COPE to record levels and making new strides in grassroots activism and communications.

Ed is a talented leader, and he has a strong foundation to build on. IBEW's outgoing president, J.J. Barry, had a long, impressive tenure at the IBEW. Jack is from Syracuse, NY and joined Local 43 in Syracuse in 1943. He served on the executive board and became business manager in 1962. In 1968, he began serving as International Representative and then, in 1976, became International vice president of the third district which includes New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware.

Jack was a virtuoso organizer, and during his tenure, he began a number of important, new initiatives in education and training for IBEW members. He was widely respected and honored throughout this country and around the world for his outstanding work. While I will miss him in his position as president, I look forward to working with him in a new capacity in the coming years.

I also recognize Jerry O'Connor who was appointed to take Ed's place as IBEW secretary-treasurer. Jerry has been on the IBEW staff since 1987 and has served as International vice president of the IBEW's sixth district covering Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin since 1995. He